

Messersmith Home- Center of Cedar Valley Politics by John K. Haws Jr.

A bright red elephant decorated with stars, and blue trim is the symbol of the Republican party. It is the party of Abraham Lincoln and Ronald Reagan. The bright blue donkey a kicking its heels into the air and embellished with stars and red stripes represents the party of Andrew Jackson and John Kennedy and today with Barak Obama. The red states versus the blue states and the Republican congress battling with the Democratic President is the story of the political struggles between the Democrats and Republicans.

In Cedar Fort, Utah the symbol of the struggle between the Democrats and the Republicans was the Ralph and Lizzie Smith (Messersmith) home. It was the scene of much contention over politics and the center of the political process in Cedar Fort.

Ralph Smith was the chairman of the Republican Party in Cedar Fort. His family had always been strong supporters of the Republican Party. His wife Margaret Elizabeth Berry Smith was the chairman of the Democratic Party in Cedar Fort. The Berry clan have always been Democrats. She was no different in her support for the Democratic Party.

Her sister Josephine married John Cooper of Lehi. The Cooper line has been a symbol of the Democratic Party in Lehi with her son JB Cooper. He was elected to many terms of the Lehi City Council as a Democrat and as a State Legislator. The Berrys of Cedar Fort are democrats to this day.

Up to several years ago, the registering to vote and the voting had to take place in your district boundaries. A lot of the time, the registration happened in the home of the District Chairman. It was no different in Cedar Fort. The registration for the Republicans took place in the Ralph Smith home. The registration for the Democrats took place in the Lizzie Smith home.

The logistics of the registration took great finesse by the owners of the home. The Democrats and Lizzie Berry Smith were invited to come to the front door and into her Living Room and sitting room. Here was her finest furniture. The Cedar Fort residents who wanted to register as a democrat came in the front door and filled out the paperwork. Lizzie knew everyone in Cedar Fort so it was an easy process to fill out such paperwork because she know them so well.

The Republicans could not come to the front door. They had to go to the side door into the kitchen. This is where the old coal stove was and they could come sit by the fire in the comfortable old rockers and chill with Ralph. Many were used to coming through this door and chatting about all kinds of things. Many times it would end up in some games of cards at the old table that was on the east side of the room. Here the Republican processes took place keeping the American political process alive.

When voting came about, they all came in the front door to the living room. Both Ralph and Lizzie were the judges of election and the voting came in their little house. The white house was on the north side of the main road across the street from the old school and church. Down the street a half block was the Cedar Fort Mercantile, where the small building could provide a cold drink, or the basic items of food for existence. This was the center of Cedar Fort existence. A little flag was placed out in front of the house. At 6 a.m. sharp, Ralph would come out, (unless he made Lizzie do it), and yell, "Hear ye, Hear ye, the polls are now open." This has been a tradition from the beginning of this country.

The citizens of Cedar Fort would come to their house to vote. If some resident had not voted, Ralph would send one of his many sons to go and fetch the citizen to vote. (especially if it was a Republican).

While this was a real divided home when it came to politics, voting was a different matter. In those days, it was a very clear tradition that the wife did not vote different than her husband. If the husband and wife voted for different people, it would void out their votes.

Grandma Smith was no different. She always followed her husband and not her conscience to ensure that their votes counted. Many times she cried as she did it, she never once went against her husband. After her husband died, she was able to vote for whoever she desired. She related what a joy it was to vote Democrat when there was no other ballot to void.

In 1960, the national election was between Vice-President Richard Nixon and new-comer democrat John F. Kennedy. This was a particularly hard one for Lizzie. She did not like Richard Nixon at all. She said he had bad eyes. She watched all the propaganda and she was even able to listen to the debate even though the reception was bad in Cedar Fort for television.

Her husband was a strong Nixon supporter. When the voting came, she cast her ballot for Richard Nixon and the Republicans. It was a hardest vote she ever had to cast. But John F. Kennedy became the President of the United States in spite of her having to vote for Richard Nixon, and that gave her peace.

It was a traumatic day on Friday November 22, 1963, when her President was assassinated. She totally mourned the loss of her President and felt so sad that she had not been able to vote for him.

It was that week, that Lizzie gathered political memorabilia about John F. Kennedy and made a wall grouping paying tribute to her President. There was a record with speeches of the late President hangin on her wall. The collection included a large button declaring John F. Kennedy for President. She had photographs of the President and news articles about his death. She had ribbons and other items paying tribute to Kennedy. There was even a newspaper clipping where John Jr. saluted his father. These were hung on her west kitchen wall by her cupboards for the remainder of her life. She loved President Kennedy.

As her body slowed down and she went to live at her daughter's house, she would tell her grandson the stories of President Kennedy. That grandson now has this collection of President Kennedy memorabilia in a beautiful frame in tribute to

Lizzie and her love of President Kennedy and service to the American Political process.

Asked if she had the chance would she go back and change her votes; she emphatically said no, because she was one with her beloved husband; but she still wishes that she would have secretly voted for John F. Kennedy.

As one drives by that remodeled house and site today, it is a symbol of the Cedar Fort political processes and the service to ensure that the United States Government is a government of the people. It may not be the White House or the Philadelphia Independence Hall, but it still serves as a symbol of the United States Political process.